

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Religious Studies (5RS14)
Paper 01 Sikhism

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GCSE Religious Studies 5RS14/01 Sikhism

This unit continues to attract a large number of entries from candidates not of a Sikh background. Candidates are advised to carefully study the glossary to learn the distinct names for different aspects of God, to clarify the difference between the panj piare and the panj kakke and reinforce their understanding of Vaisakhi and Diwali. While part (c) questions were usually attempted successfully, candidates found it harder to secure full marks for part (b) questions. They must look at the demands of the question and focus only on two reasons to support their views. They should explain each of these reasons in depth, perhaps by offering an example or supporting quotation. It is important that such development does not take the general form of something being important as it leads to good karma, which then enables one to break out of the cycle of samsara and achieve mukti. Such development was only credited when directly relevant to the question asked.

Section 1

This section was generally well answered, though in question 1(d) some candidates did not consider to what extent social responsibilities were part of Sikh spirituality. As a result question 2 was more popular and candidates successfully addressed questions on the importance of sewa, gender equality and the nature of God as Teacher.

Section 2

Questions 3 and 4 were equally popular. There were good responses on the importance of Guru Nanak and the gurdwara for Sikhs. However, 4(d) could have been attempted more successfully by providing examples of events that might be equally or more important than Guru Nanak's river experience. A simple explanation of why this event was chosen could lead to further marks.

Section 3

There was some confusion about the difference between ceremonies and practices. Ceremonies relate specifically to rites of passage – birth, amrit, marriage and death. This affected the responses of some candidates to 5(b), 6(b) and 6(d). Some candidates confused melas and gurpurbs and some confused kirpan and kirtan. A clear understanding of the glossary would help such candidates. While some candidates were very confident in explaining the importance of Amritsar, others seemed to only have a vague idea about it. Section 3 did not appear to have always received adequate time allocation.

Section 4

Candidates appeared to have a more solid understanding of the birth ceremony in question 7(b) than the death ceremony in question 8(b). While candidates do not need detailed knowledge about the process of the ceremonies themselves they do need to be able to consider the importance of them. Candidates provided a range of excellent responses to question 7(d) on the ease or otherwise of following the Sikh way of life today and question 8(c) on why Sikhs should help to relieve suffering in the UK.

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